What is claimed is:

1. A method for determining whether an agent is capable of inhibiting the fusion of a macrophage-tropic primary isolate of HIV-1 to a $CD4^+$ cell which comprises:

(a) contacting (i) an appropriate $CD4^+$ cell, which is labeled with a first dye, with (ii) a cell expressing the HIV-1 envelope glycoprotein of the macrophage-tropic primary isolate of HIV-1 on its surface, which is labeled with a second dye, in the presence of an excess of the agent under conditions permitting the fusion of the $CD4^+$ cell to the cell expressing the HIV-1 envelope glycoprotein on its surface in the absence of the agent, the first and second dyes being selected so as to allow resonance energy transfer between the dyes;

(b) exposing the product of step (a) to conditions which would result in resonance energy transfer if fusion has occurred; and

(c) determining whether there is a reduction of resonance energy transfer, when compared with the resonance energy transfer in the absence of the agent, a decrease in transfer indicating that the agent is capable of inhibiting fusion of HIV-1 to $CD4^+$ cells.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the $CD4^+$ cell is a PM1 cell, a primary human T lymphocyte, or a primary human macrophage.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the HIV-1 envelope glycoprotein$^+$ cell is an $HIV\text{-}1_{JR\text{-}FL}$ gp120/gp41 HeLa cell.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the agent is not previously known.

5. An agent determined to be capable of inhibiting the fusion of a macrophage-tropic primary isolate of HIV-1 to a $CD4^+$ cell using the method of claim 1.

6. A therapeutic agent capable of inhibiting the fusion of an HIV-1 envelope $glycoprotein^+$ cell with an appropriate $CD4^+$ cell using the method of claim 1.